GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1174
ANSWERED ON:28.07.2015
Exploitation of Natural Resources
Singh Shri Sushil Kumar

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a High Power Committee constituted under the Chairmanship of a member of planning commission has suggested that rules should be made flexible to some extent so that the natural resources of the country could be exploited properly and environment and wildlife could also be protected;
(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;
(c) whether the Ministry is insisting on 100% ban in dense forest areas to maintain no go areas;
(d) whether it is a fact that there is a reserve of about 60 crore tonnes of coal in the 'no go' areas; and
(e) whether the Government is planning to give NOC to mining and irrigation projects and if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) A Committee constituted under Chairmanship of Shri B. K. Chaturvedi, a member of the then planning commission recommended that Forest Clearances for coal mining should be given based on procedures under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and rules made there under. The committee further recommended that coal bearing blocks should normally be taken for mining and clearances given for it except where there is a strong case for rejection due to extremely dense forests and other ecological and environment consideration of serious nature. The committee also recommended that given the limited natural resources and international involvement, it is not possible to be too restrictive.

(b) to (d) A Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted to consider the environmental and developmental issues relating to coal mining and other development projects, in its fifth meeting held under Chairmanship of the then Finance Minister on 20th September 2011 examined the said recommendation and suggested inter-alia that identified pristine forest areas where any mining activity would lead to irreversible damage to the forests should be barred from any kind of non-forest activity. The GoM further suggested that all such forests which can never be regenerated to the desired quality should be protected. The GoM also suggested that a committee comprising experts in the field can be constituted to identify such forests.
Accordingly, a committee under Chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has been constituted to formulate draft parameters for identification of inviolate forest areas where no mining activity may be allowed. The draft parameters for identification of inviolate forest areas formulated by the said Committee provides that, among others, compact patches of minimum 1 km sq. size of very dense forests shall be classified as inviolate irrespective of the value of other parameters.
As the parameters for identification of inviolate forest areas have not yet been finalised, extent of coal reserves likely to fall in these inviolate areas is not known.

(e) Approvals for mining and irrigation projects, wherever required, are given on case to case basis, in accordance with the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980; the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and the rules, guidelines and notifications issued thereunder.
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